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MATTERS OF VENGEANCE

A Short Adventure for Four 15th-Level Player Characters

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Matters of Vengeance is a short D&D adventure for four 15th-level player characters (PCs). The story is set in and around the village of Three Forks. You can place the action in any remote section of your campaign world that is a few days' ride from a city. The area you select should feature nearby forested regions and be able to accommodate an abandoned village and a nearby manor house as well. The adventure is designed to take place during winter to help set the mood, although you can change the season without changing the adventure. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks, including the *Player's Handbook,* the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* and the *Monster Manual.* This adventure utilizes the v.3.5 rules, but it can easily be used with the 3.0 rules as well.

To get started, print out this adventure (including the maps). Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). In addition, you might want to familiarize yourself with the death knight template from *Monster Manual II* and the swordwraith from *Fiend Folio,* though all the statistics needed to run those creatures are provided with the adventure.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times. Any unshaded boxes contain important information for you.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ombrol Losladan was born in the small village of Three Forks to an honest peasant family. As a child, he made friends with a girl named Taryn Bistimmer, who was nearly his age. As the two children grew older, their friendship blossomed into romance, and they began to court. Their love was a simple one, uncomplicated by jealousy or parental expectations. But they were poor, so Ombrol knew he must make his fortune before claiming Taryn as his bride. On his sixteenth birthday, he pledged his undying love for his lady fair and gave her his family locket as a promise to return and marry her. Then he left the village to join the militia in a nearby city.

During his absence, Taryn's family fell on hard times. Several seasons of poor crops put the family deeply into debt. Taryn's father died of a wasting disease, and to keep their home, her mother had to grant her only daughter's hand in marriage to the local baron, an older man named Kaiius Holden. Thus, when Ombrol returned home six years later as a decorated soldier, he found that his one true love was already married, though the union had produced no children.

Instead of returning to the city, Ombrol stayed on to help his family, since his parents were growing old and could no longer farm the fields as they once had. Meanwhile, he kept a silent watch on Baron Holden's manor and pined for Taryn. His love for her drove him to obsession, and he began to keep track of the times that Taryn left for the village. Eventually, Ombrol worked up the courage to approach her in the market.

FORLORN LOVERS

Their meeting was brief, and what Taryn said unsettled Ombrol, worsening his already fragile mental state. Baron Holden was a cold man who was interested only in his own happiness and comfort. His youth had long been over, and their marriage was a loveless one. Worse yet, she constantly feared for her own safety, since all of the guards answered to him and gave her little regard. Taryn longed to return to her one true love, but breaking away from the baron would place the two lovers and both their families in grave danger. When their rushed conversation was over, Ombrol sullenly watched Taryn leave,

Over the next two months, the former lovers met in secret on several occasions. Each time, their separation weighed more heavily upon them. Ultimately, Ombrol decided to take action. Donning his armor and sword once more, he pledged his services to the baron so that he could be closer to his beloved Taryn. Baron Holden accepted Ombrol's pledge of loyalty and placed the young soldier in his personal guard.

By this time, Ombrol was well aware of the baron's schedule, and he often found excuses to stay behind while the baron went hunting or walked among his people. Ombrol and Taryn sometimes managed to sneak away together in the baron's absence. Ultimately, however, another guard caught them trysting, subdued Ombrol by force of arms, and took him prisoner. Left shackled in the dungeon to wait for the baron's return, Ombrol bemoaned his fate. But his lady love was a resourceful woman, and she managed to obtain the keys to his cell and his manacles from one of the guards. Sneaking into the dungeon, she let herself into his cell and unshackled him. Knowing that both of them would face the baron's wrath if they stayed, the two lovers fled the manor on horseback.

The baron and his men scoured the nearby woods for his wayward wife and his treacherous guardsman, and their trail was quickly found. The baron's men set up an ambush for the pair along a wooded roadside and fell upon Ombrol and Taryn as they passed through. Ombrol was quick to rise to his lady's defense, but Baron Holden's forces had the advantage of superior numbers. Though Ombrol fought furiously, dispatching several of the guards who had once trusted him as one of their own, the baron finally ended the battle by firing a bolt through his wife's heart. She died in Ombrol's arms. After watching the life fade from her eyes, Ombrol offered no resistance as the baron's guards chained him and returned him to the manor.

DESCENT INTO MADNESS

For years Ombrol prayed for death as he wasted away in Holden's dungeon. He mourned his lost Taryn, but his grief slowly gave way to a cold anger. During his long incarceration, Ombrol plotted how he would kill the baron. In the end, however, Kaiius Holden simply disappeared. Though his loyal retainers spent months searching for him, he was never found. When they finally gave up on finding the baron alive, the guards freed Ombrol. They bore him no ill will for what he had done, and they didn't wish to see him waste away for the rest of his life.

Upon his release from captivity, Ombrol learned that his parents had died poor and destitute. The baron had told them that their son had deserted them and their village, and he levied twice the standard taxes upon them as punishment for the young man's crimes. Upon learning their fate, Ombrol became sullen and angry. He returned to the house where he had been raised and began to drink heavily.

During this inebriated period, a voice began to speak to him, offering words of comfort and urging him toward revenge. It taught him to cultivate his hatred and focus his loathing until he could use the skills he had acquired in combat against people who were normally considered good and upstanding citizens. The voice belonged to none other than the demon prince Orcus, who sought to make the unhappy Ombrol his tool. Ombrol returned to the manor by stealth and slew the guards who still lived there, along with their families and the few members of Baron Holden's family that remained. Now a known killer,

Ombrol went into hiding, but he was eventually tracked down and slain by the local militia.

DEATH KNIGHT ASCENDANT

But Ombrol was not to be allowed the peace of death. Orcus animated his lifeless husk of a body, transforming him into a death knight. He recruited the undead from the surrounding area into his service and used his fearsome army to conquer the manor house where he had once served the baron. Realizing that they had fallen under the control of a fearsome undead lord, the villagers quickly fled the area. Their dwellings eventually fell into disrepair, and the once verdant fields became choked with weeds. The death knight stayed in the manor, biding his time and occasionally ordering brutal attacks on people traveling through the area that he controlled.

BLOODLINE

And so matters remained for more than two hundred years. Recently, however, a young noble named Erim Holden came to the area with his entourage. A descendant of the baron's nephew and the last living descendant of Kaiius Holden, Erin sought to reclaim the family property. Upon realizing that only undead now inhabited the village, he left for the city to seek reinforcements. But Ombrol had seen Erim and instinctively recognized him as a relative of the hated baron. Lord Ombrol ordered his undead followers to attack the baron's men and take the noble alive. The undead slew many of Holden's guards, but Erim himself escaped to the city on horseback.

Ombrol, intent on revenge, hired the Dragon's Fang mercenary company to help him deal with the living inhabitants of the city and locate the baron's nephew. The company distrusts the death knight, and many of its members feel that their leader, Akaron Swiftblade, has made a critical error by aligning them with an undead lord. Erim Holden, for his part, seeks a group of adventurers to clear his manor and return him to his rightful position of power.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The characters receive an offer of employment from Erim Holden, who wants some adventurers to rid his manor of an undead infestation. Shortly after the party leaves for the abandoned village, however, Erim is abducted by members of the Dragon's Fang mercenary company and whisked away to the manor. Ombrol immediately begins making arrangements for a ceremony in which he will end the bloodline of his most hated enemy by sacrificing his last relative to Orcus.

Upon entering the village, the PCs must fight their way past some undead patrols and living guards. Once inside, they find various clues that divulge the history of the death knight. To save Erim's life, the party must dispatch the undead within the manor, deal with the mercenary company, and stop the death knight before the sacrificial rite has concluded.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are several ways that the characters may become involved in this storyline. They may be drawn by tales of the abandoned village and the nearby manor filled with undead, or they may be acquaintances of Erim Holden who have agreed to help him regain his property. Perhaps the PCs are simply be passing through the area when they hear that a newcomer is in need of adventurers. Alternatively, one of the characters may either be from the city or have roots in the village of Three Forks.

As the DM, it is your job to decide how best to involve the characters in the adventure. You can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- While traveling through an area of the campaign world they have not previously explored, the PCs happen upon the abandoned village. After they encounter a few undead patrols, it should become clear that a more powerful evil directs these groups. If they withdraw to seek more information before approaching the manor, they can glean some half-remembered tales about the village from the most venerable nearby residents, as well as wildly inaccurate tales from the superstitious locals, who believe it to be a place of extreme evil.
- During another adventure, the party finds an old tome with yellowed, crumbling pages. This book describes many notable events that took place in this area about two centuries ago. Some of the more interesting entries describe the plight of the villagers, who vacated the area when it was overrun with undead. Although the village has long been forgotten, tales told by bards and locals maintain that little has changed since the tome was penned.
- A necromancer who is on friendly terms with the PCs approaches them with an interesting conundrum. Ever since he moved approximately 50 miles from the village, the undead he has created and charged with guarding his property have been

wandering away, seemingly of their own volition. He can point the PCs in the direction the undead have been going, but he knows nothing else of the area.

- The party learns of a trading caravan that was set upon by undead creatures while passing through the area. More than half of the soldiers guarding the caravan were killed, and their corpses were pulled off the road and toward the village.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Whether you use one of the plot hooks above or make up one of your own, the party should meet with Erim Holden before tackling the manor house. He is presently staying at an upscale inn located in the nearby city. While a meeting with him is not absolutely necessary to begin the adventure, it helps convey the history behind the manor, lets the PCs know who Erim Holden is, and warns them that undead inhabit the village of Three Forks.

Erim Holden stands 5 feet 6 inches tall and appears strong and stocky. His hair is brown, and the top of his head is bald. He keeps his remaining hair at shoulder length and wears it in braids caught with platinum bands. Long sideburns run to his chin, and he has a long mustache bound with ornate golden bands.

Erim shows the PCs the deed to the property, which dates back five hundred years. He tells them of his uncle, Kaiius Holden, who he believes died at the hands of the undead now holding the manor and the village. He describes his visit to the village, mentioning that he saw the silhouette of an armored figure, with red pinpoints of light where its eyes should have been.

Erim offers the characters 8,000 gp worth of gems if they can successfully clear out the manor. A successful opposed Diplomacy check raises his offer to 10,000 gp, but no higher. One of the conditions he sets is that the characters not disturb any of the treasures they find within the manor, since he wants to preserve any family heirlooms that remain. While he prefers to make full payment upon completion of the job, he does offer the characters 50% of the market value of any treasures they find within the manor.

Creatures: The inn is filled with numerous travelers and servants, plus the innkeepers. Five of Erim's guards stay in a room across the hallway and can be summoned in a single round with a shout.

Erim Holden: Male human aristocrat 7; hp 34.

Guards: Male or female human warrior 5; hp 35.

THE VILLAGE OF THREE FORKS

Three Forks was so named because of the three creeks that converge within its limits. It is windy and snowing heavily when the party arrives, and the light that filters through the trees is dim. Characters can see to a maximum range of 100 feet without low-light vision or 200 feet with it. Darkvision allows vision to its normal range or 100 feet, whichever is longer.

At any range less than or equal to maximum visibility, creatures have concealment (20% miss chance). Artificial light negates the concealment, but only within the area that the light source illuminates brightly. Darkvision negates this concealment within its normal range.

Many of the dwellings have fallen apart completely, and the rest are in extreme disrepair. The only exception is the manor on the hill, which has been immaculately maintained.

When the PCs first enter the village, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

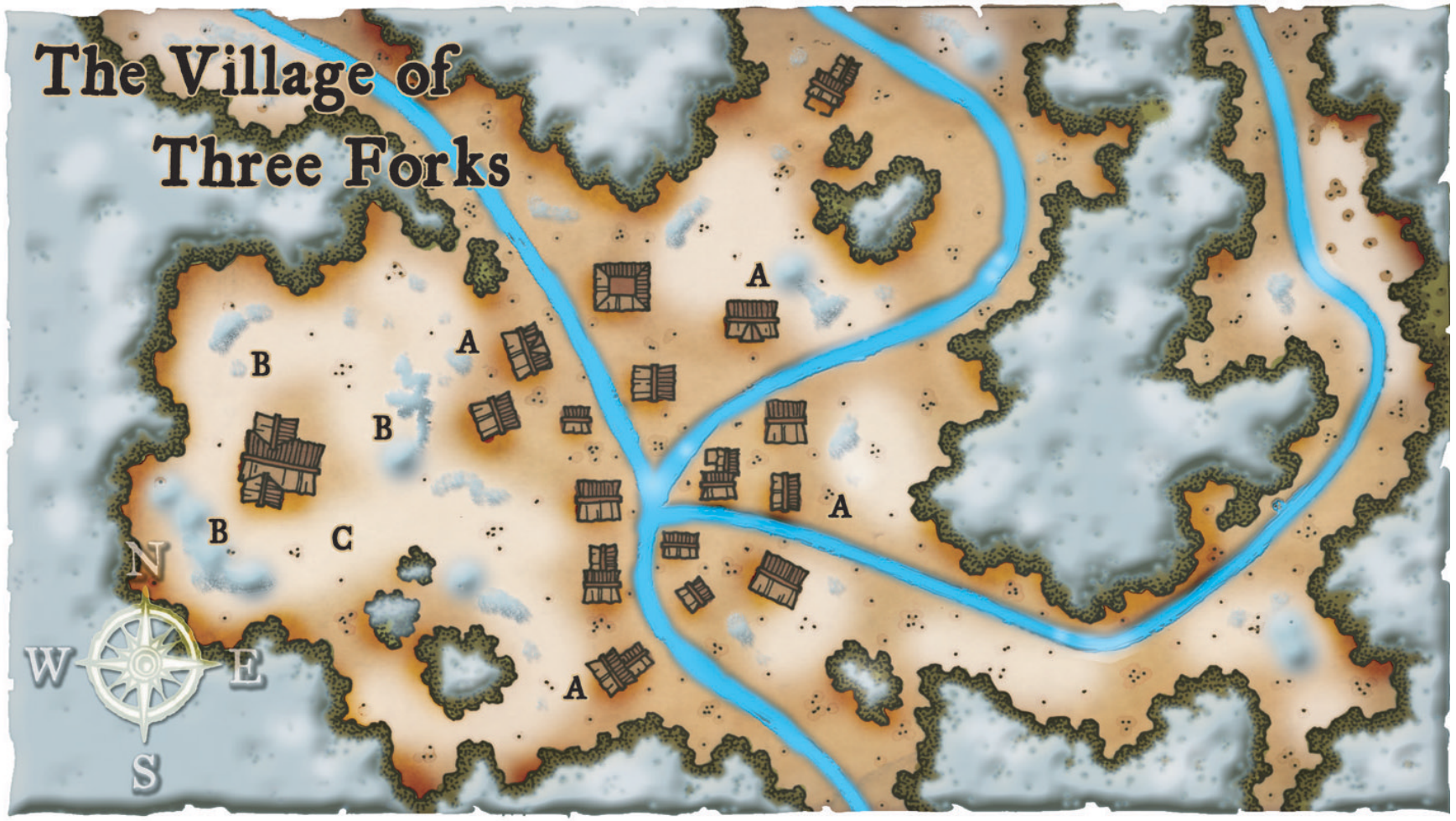
> The windblown snow carries a chill that seems even colder than the wintry conditions would merit, and the light that filters down from the gray sky is dim at best. No sounds break the stillness of the falling snow.
>
> Ahead lie the remains of a village. Many of the structures still stand, though they display the ravages of extreme age and lack of maintenance. Many of them are little more than weatherbeaten wood planks just barely held together with rusted nails. Upon the highest hill, however, stands a fine manor that appears to be inhabited, judging by the lights in the windows.

Unless the PCs have taken great pains to make themselves invisible, they are already being observed by the undead patrolling the village in area A.

Creatures: Undead patrol areas A and B, while the human fighters of the Dragon Fang mercenary company guard area C.

Tactics: The undead do not attack until the PCs come within 50 feet of their positions. They coordinate their activities only with others in their own groups; they do not assist groups in other locations.

Development: The undead guardians do not bother to report the presence of the party to their master, since they assume that the intrusion will be observed by the guards on the hill near the manor.


The Village of
Three Forks
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A. GUARDPOSTS OF THE DEAD (EL 13)

The guardposts within the village are staffed with shadows. These creatures are the manor's first line of defense, since the death knight believes that strangers would typically enter the village first.

Creatures: Six shadows are permanently stationed here, keeping a silent watch for anyone entering the area. They are hiding beneath overhangs in ruined buildings, under the branches of trees, or in any other places of deep shadow. Their orders are to allow strangers to enter the village but to attack anyone who comes within 50 feet of their positions.

Shadows (6): hp 58, 63, 65, 70, 75, 80; see *Monster Manual,* page 221.

Tactics: Anyone trying to hit a shadow has a 20% miss chance as described in the previous section because of the shadowy conditions, in addition to the normal 50% miss chance for an incorporeal opponent. Thus, anyone trying to hit a shadow without employing a light source or darkvision must check for a miss twice with each hit—once for the shadow's concealment (20%) and once for the regular incorporeal miss chance (50%). A light source or darkvision negates only the first of these miss chances. Furthermore, each shadow has a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks as long as it remains in a place of deep shadow.

The shadows use their hiding and concealment to maximum benefit, engaging in strike-and-fade tactics against the party. Each shadow attacks once, then uses the withdraw action to vanish into the ground or another solid object. After that, it moves to another suitably shadowy area, reemerges, hides, and seeks out a new foe. The shadows disperse throughout the surrounding area and attempt to catch the PCs individually whenever possible. Their intention is not to kill invaders, but to harass and weaken them before they can approach the manor, which is guarded by swordwraiths and mercenaries.

Development: The shadows continue to harass the PCs until all of them are destroyed.

B. SHADOW POSTS (EL 13)

All of these locations serve as stationary guardposts. They are staffed by Lord Losladan's elite guardians, the swordwraiths.

Creatures: Swordwraiths stand a constant vigil here to prevent anyone from entering the manor. Because the manor house stands atop a hill, they have a good view of any combat that occurs in the village.

Swordwraiths (7): hp 32, 32, 35, 36, 37, 40, 42; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: Using concealment to their advantage, the swordwraiths try to surprise the PCs. Three of them initiate combat by firing their crossbows at any spellcasters in the group. The others remain hidden and approach the party by stealth, attempting to gang up on any characters standing away from the main group. Once the PCs are aware of the swordwraiths' locations, all of them draw their swords and engage the characters in melee.

Any attack against a swordwraith made without the benefit of artificial light or darkvision has a 20% miss chance because of the shadowy conditions. The natural gloom of the area also grants each swordwraith a +5 bonus on Hide checks.

Development: Surviving swordwraiths attempt to bring the bodies of any creatures they slay to the manor as potential undead allies for the death knight.

C. MANOR ENTRANCE (EL 15)

The area in front of the manor's doors is not obscured by a fence or any other structures. When the PCs enter the area, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> Five menacing humanoid figures stand before the entrance to this lone manor. The dark, imposing structure appears to be made of dark gray basalt stones that have been carved into bricks and mortared together. A pair of 8-foot-tall, iron-bound oak doors bars the entrance. The snow in front of this area is heavily packed down from the constant pacing of the guards.

Creatures: Protecting the front of the manor are five Dragon's Fang mercenaries.

Mercenaries (4): Male or female human fighter 10; hp 55, 58, 64, 70; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenary Wizard: Male human wizard 10; hp 37; AC 15; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: When the PCs approach, the mercenaries first try to warn them away. Should this tactic fail, the fighters line up against the party's fighters, while the mercenary wizard stands behind the battle lines and fires offensive spells at the PCs.

Development: Unlike the mercenaries within the manor, these NPCs are fiercely loyal to Akaron Swiftblade. They are willing to stop attacking for a while to parley, but they neither abandon their posts nor allow the PCs to pass. Should the battle go poorly for them, they flee the immediate area, then sneak into the village and order the shadows to follow them. Once so fortified, they attempt to catch up with the party inside the manor.

Doors: The doors to the manor are secured by a good quality lock.

Strong Wooden Door: 2 in. thick, hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23, Open Lock DC 30.

HOLDEN MANOR

The inside of Holden Manor is dark and gloomy. Most of the interior illumination is provided by candles, though chandeliers light the larger rooms. The interior walls are made of the same basalt rock as the exterior of the manor, though the floor is made of polished gray marble.

The manor's interior was once decorated with countless works of art, including banners, tapestries, paintings, and trophies. Most of these decorations have long since decayed or been taken down, since the death knight prefers the place to look as grim and dark as his soul. The few moldering bits of cloth still hanging on the walls have faded to a ghost of their former vibrancy.

Creatures: Except where noted, the manor is staffed with animated human skeletons. These creatures function as servants rather than guards, and they do not attack unless provoked. They constantly run about replacing candles that have burned down and relighting those that have gone out, as well as tending to the numerous other chores that are commonplace in the maintenance of such a large dwelling. There is a 10% chance of encountering a skeletal servant within each room or hallway. Unless attacked, they ignore the PCs.

Skeletons, human (20): hp 6 each; see *Monster Manual,* page 225.

Tactics: The skeletal servants of the manor have nothing more than their own skeletal claws to fight with if attacked. Since they have no organized strategy for defense, they are unlikely to present much of a challenge for the characters.

1. ENTRANCE HALL (EL 15)

This room once served as both a greeting area and an entertainment room, though it now functions as a secondary guardpost. When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> This enormous room serves as the entrance hall for the manor. The walls are made of the same basalt blocks as the exterior of the manor, and the floor is made of polished gray marble. A total of eight pillars made from the same marble as the floor support the vaulted ceiling above. A high-hanging chandelier lights the room, and the walls are devoid of any decorations. A long, red rug with a geometric pattern picked out in gilded thread lies directly in front of the manor's main doors.

Creatures: Five swordwraiths inhabit this room, along with four members of the Dragon's Fang mercenary company.

Swordwraiths (5): hp 32, 35, 36, 40, 42; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenaries (3): Male or female human fighter 10; hp 48, 58, 64; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenary Wizard: Male or female human wizard 10; hp 37; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: The swordwraiths immediately attempt to engage the PCs in melee combat, as do the mercenaries if they are not asked to parley (see below). The mercenary fighters shoot their crossbows at whichever opponents they view as the greatest threats, while the wizard fires offensive spells at the party, targeting any PCs that appear to be spellcasters first.

Development: To parley with the mercenaries, at least one character must forego any attacks during the first round of combat to speak to them. Doing so provokes an attack of opportunity from any swordwraiths that threaten this character's square. If the PCs successfully use Diplomacy to convince these mercenaries that their leader has led them astray by aligning with the undead, they agree to ignore the intruders and slip away from the manor. They order any swordwraiths still fighting to stand down once an agreement has been reached.

2. TROPHY ROOM (EL 15)

While he was alive, Baron Holden used this room to display the many trophies he had accumulated during his numerous hunts. When Lord Losladan assumed control of the manor, he destroyed the baron's trophies to make room for more gruesome displays of his own. When the party enters this room, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> On either side of this rectangular room stand large trophy cases containing the grisly remains of humanoids. On one shelf rests a mummified human heart, and on another the decapitated head of an elf, his face permanently contorted in what must have been his final cry of pain. On yet another shelf is a disembodied brain floating in a jar filled with liquid. Hands, legs, arms, and

por tions of torsos in various states of decay complete the gruesome display. Beside the trophy cases stand two large iron statues of muscular warriors brandishing barbed longswords.

Hanging on the far wall is one decoration that, unlike all the others in this manor house, appears to have been perfectly preserved. It is a painted portrait of a young woman with pale skin, blue eyes, and long, chestnut-colored hair. Candelabras placed on either side of the picture provide flattering illumination for it.

The picture on the wall depicts Lord Losladan's beloved Taryn. The death knight painted this picture himself after taking the manor, and it is the one decoration that he insists on carefully preserving. Though realistic, the portrait itself would fetch no more than 20 gp on the open market. The ornate gold frame, however, is worth 200 gp.

Creatures: The statues in this room are iron golems.

Golem, Iron (2): hp 129 each; see *Monster Manual,* page 136.

Tactics: If the party enters the room and comes within 10 feet of the portrait, the iron golems animate and attack. They lead off their assault with their poison gas attack, attempting to catch their foes by surprise. Thereafter, they engage in melee combat with the closest opponents.

3. KITCHEN

Until recently, this room was kept empty and dark. When the Dragon's Fang mercenary company moved into the manor, its members began using this room to prepare their meals. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

This room appears to be the manor's kitchen. Against the far wall stands a cast-iron stove, and fresh blood upon the countertops gives silent evidence that meat has been prepared here recently. Numerous cabinets and counters provide ample storage.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Development: A brief glance around the room reveals a small, unlocked door that leads to the pantry, which is currently stocked with the meat from half of a slain deer. The pantry is naturally cold, but it has been turned into an effective icebox by the addition of ice blocks brought in from the outside.

Also in the kitchen are 10 days worth of trail rations, 2 gallons of wine in ceramic jugs, an ornate china set worth 700 gp, and a set of silver flatware inlaid with gold (worth 300 gp).

4. BANQUET HALL

This room serves as the manor's banquet hall. Normally it lies empty, but recently the mercenaries have been using it to eat their meals. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

A bleached white human skull serves as the centerpiece of the banquet table that dominates this long room. Plates filled with bones and cold cooked meat still remain, along with a few cups half filled with wine.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Development: There is nothing of value in this room. The leftover food is still relatively fresh, and the PCs may safely consume if they so choose.

5. TARYN'S BEDROOM (EL 10)

Taryn once shared this chamber with her husband, though they typically slept in separate beds. Following Taryn's death, the baron moved into room 6, leaving his wife's belongings undisturbed here. The death knight had the baron's bed stripped, but ordered Taryn's bed made up daily with fresh linens. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

This room contains two beds, a wardrobe, and two nightstands, each supporting a small oil lamp. The bed to the right is immaculately made and topped with a frilly bedspread. The bed to the left has been stripped down to the frame.

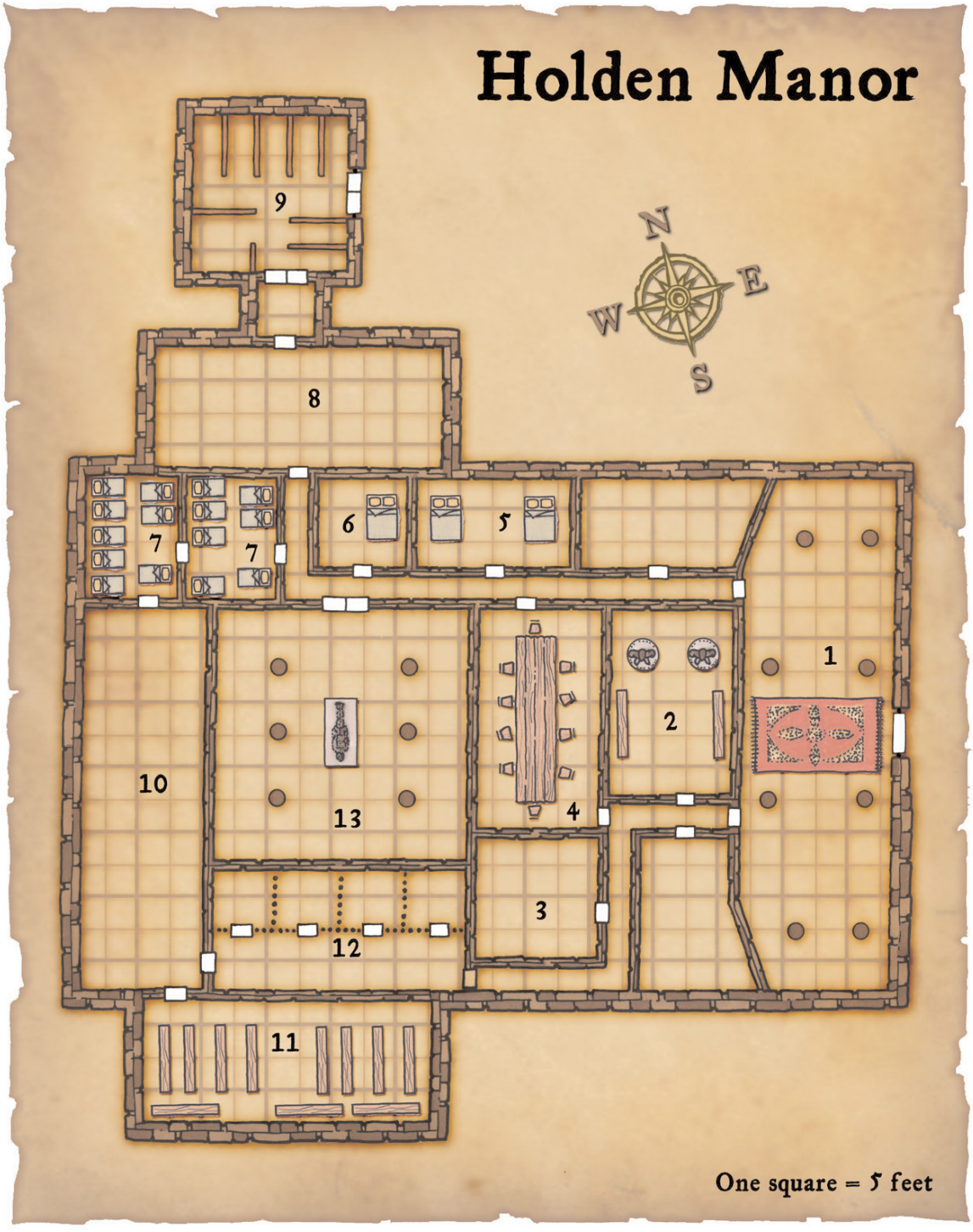
Lord Losladan is the only creature allowed to enter this room, which he considers sacred. All of Taryn's belongings remain undisturbed here.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Trap: The door to this room is trapped with an *energy drain* trap.

Energy Drain Trap: CR 10; see *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 74.

Development: A successful DC 15 Search check reveals a number of valuables (see Treasure, below) as well as Taryn's diary. Anyone who reads this book learns the history of Taryn and Ombrol up until the point of



their flight from the manor. The final entry describes how Taryn was going to free Ombrol from his cell (room 12).

Treasure: The items of value in this room include 60 sp, 5 gp, 3 rubies (each worth 50 gp), a *bag of holding*, and two *potions of cure serious wounds*.

6. MASTER BEDROOM

Following Taryn's death, the baron moved into this bedroom. When Lord Losladan assumed control of the manor, he redecorated this chamber and made it his own. Although he does not sleep, many of his habits mimic those he had when he was alive. He frequently

comes to this room and meditates upon his dark purpose in the service of Orcus. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This chamber is clearly a bedroom, though other than the threadbare mattress on an oak wooden frame and a weathered-looking chair upholstered in leather, the room appears empty.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Development: Other than the bed and the chair, Lord Losladan keeps no items of any kind in this room.

7. BARRACKS (EL 16)

Once quarters for servants, these two rooms now serve as barracks for the Dragon's Fang mercenary company. The room is messy, as befits a chamber where soldiers spend most of their off-duty time. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This rectangular room contains several beds, each with a chest positioned at its base. Six soldiers, all wearing armor and clothing similar to that of the guards outside the main entrance, are playing a game of dice.

Creatures: Five mercenaries and one mercenary wizard are whiling away their off-duty hours in each room when the PCs arrive.

Mercenaries (5): Male or female human fighter 10; hp 58, 57, 64, 67, 72; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenary Wizard: Female human wizard 10; hp 37; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: The mercenaries are so engrossed in their game that they do not hear the PCs unless they make a great deal of noise in their approach. Thus, the characters have a good chance to surprise them.

As with area 1, the PCs may attempt a diplomatic approach to the situation. For such a tactic to succeed, at least one PC must attempt a Diplomacy check as a standard action during the first round after the party makes itself visible to the mercenaries. If the check fails or the attempt is not made, the mercenaries attack. If the check succeeds, the mercenaries hold their attacks and listen (see Development, below).

If combat ensues, the mercenaries are disorganized for the first 2 rounds unless they know the PCs are there. Thereafter, the fighters form a line and attempt to hold back the opponents, while the wizard stands back and casts offensive spells against the party.

Since these two barracks rooms connect with each other, one of the fighters seizes any possible opportunity to throw the door between the rooms open and shout for reinforcements. The mercenaries in the second barracks are making enough noise with their game that they do not hear sounds of combat otherwise. An additional five mercenaries and one mercenary wizard enter the fray 1 round after the warning is given, ensuring that the PCs are outnumbered (and possibly outmatched). If given the chance, two mercenaries flee the combat and run for area 13, intending to interrupt the ceremony in progress there and warn the death knight of the threat.

Development: Any PC who succeeds on an opposed Diplomacy check manages to convince the mercenaries to gather their possessions and leave the manor, since it is against their best interests to aid the undead.

At the foot of each bed stands a locked chest. Each may be opened either with the proper key (carried by the mercenary who owns it), or with a successful Open Lock check.

Strong Wooden Chest: 1-1/2 in. thick, hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 23, Open Lock DC 25.

Treasure: Each chest contains 500 gp, 12 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a +2 *dagger of wounding*, and 5 gems, each worth 250 gp.

8. STORAGE

At one time, this chamber was a simple storage room. Now it contains many of the personal items that once belonged to Baron Kaiius Holden. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This room appears to be littered with junk. Piles of items that appear to be broken or in poor condition litter the floor. A pathway through the debris has been cleared to allow passage between the two doors in this room, and judging by the number of footprints, it appears to receive a large amount of foot traffic.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Development: Many of the items stored in this room have either been deliberately destroyed or fallen apart through neglect. The remaining objects of value are scattered amid the junk. A successful DC 15 Search check turns up the following: a painting of Kaiius Holden that is in remarkably good condition (worth 250 gp), an ornate golden candelabra (worth 50 gp), a cloak made of some exotic material (worth 75 gp), a +2

longsword of sharpness, a jewel-encrusted family locket (worth 850 gp), and a *+2 shield* bearing the Holden family crest (a lion with an outstretched claw on a dark blue background studded with diamonds).

9. THE STABLE (EL 13)

This large chamber houses the mounts for the manor's inhabitants. Five of the stalls are designed for horses, and one larger stall (twice the usual size) houses Ombrol's fiendish warhorse. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This area is obviously a stable. Five wooden stalls are occupied by horses, and one larger holding pen houses a vile-looking black mare with the scent of brimstone about it. The corners of the chamber contain an assortment of hay, hammers, horseshoes, and barding for the animals. Eight armored figures with glowing red eyes stand guard over the animals.

Creatures: This room is inhabited by five normal heavy warhorses, a single fiendish heavy warhorse, and eight swordwraiths.

Ombrol's Stallion: Male fiendish heavy warhorse; CR 3; Large magical beast; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk +6 melee (1d6+4, hoof); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+4, 2 hooves) and +1 melee (1d4+2, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA smite good 1/day; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, scent, spell resistance 9; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide –3, Listen +5, Spot +4; Endurance, Run.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, Ombrol's stallion can make a normal melee attack to deal 4 extra points of damage against a good foe.

Heavy Warhorses (5): hp 28, 30, 32, 32, 33; see *Monster Manual,* page 273.

Swordwraiths (8): hp 32, 33, 35, 35, 36, 40, 42, 42; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: The swordwraiths attack the PCs immediately upon seeing them. The fiendish warhorse, which is Lord Losladan's summoned mount, crashes through the door to its pen as a standard action, then joins the combat. The swordwraiths attempt to engage the PCs in melee, while the warhorse begins by using its smite good attack. Thereafter, it continues the fight with its hooves.

10. TRAINING ROOM

This chamber once served as a training room for the guards who protected Baron Holden. Since the death knight gained control of the manor, only the Dragon's Fang mercenary company has made use of it. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This room appears empty save for a metal rack that holds a number of wooden swords and quarterstaffs. A white pattern depicting a swordfight between two armored soldiers is set into the gray marble of the floor.

Creatures: No one is here except possibly the ubiquitous skeletal servants (10% chance).

Development: This room contains ten wooden practice longswords and four quarterstaffs.

11. LIBRARY

This room was the private library of Baron Holden, and it served as his favorite place of relaxation. Surprisingly, Lord Losladan also retreats here often to read selections from the baron's collection. In addition to the books that the old baron kept, Lord Losladan has managed to acquire numerous other tomes written in recent years. Some describe events that have taken place in nearby lands, while others are far more fanciful and include more than a few fictional accounts. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> Bookshelves line the walls of this chamber and form rows all through the room. All the shelves are literally stuffed with books. In the center of the library stands an octagonal table with four chairs arranged around it.

Development: Though this library contains no spellbooks or other books on magic, it does offer a wide range of information on the world as it existed 200 years ago, as well as a few more up-to-date books. A character seeking specific information within these books gains a +2 competence bonus on any related Knowledge check.

12. PRISON CELLS (EL 12 OR 0)

The prison cells that the baron used to lock up local troublemakers are located in this section. Ombrol Losladan was incarcerated here after his capture, and he himself has kept a few prisoners since taking over the manor. The only living prisoner at this point,

however, is Erim Holden. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter.

> This area is divided into a series of small cells. Judging by the number of skeletal remains in several of these chambers, it appears that numerous prisoners were forgotten and left to starve after their incarceration. A man looks fearfully through the barred window in the door of the corner cell.

If the PCs have not yet defeated the death knight and his entourage in the ceremonial chamber (area 13), Akaron Swiftblade still has the only key to Erim's cell. In a few moments, he will give it to two of his mercenaries, who will arrive in 1d6 rounds to take Erim from his cell and escort him to the ceremonial chamber to be sacrificed to Orcus.

Creatures: Erim Holden is the only prisoner held here at present. He knows that the death knight has plans to sacrifice him.

Tactics: If the mercenaries arrive in time to spot the PCs, they run to area 13 to inform Akaron Swiftblade that there are intruders in the manor. The death knight and his entourage respond by moving to area 1 to wait for the characters.

Development: If the PCs manage to rescue Erim, he heartily thanks them for their timely arrival, then requests that he be escorted to the nearest door or be given a place to hide until the PCs have finished clearing out the manor. If the party has already dispatched the fiendish warhorse and the swordwraiths in the stable (area 9), that would be an ideal location for him to hide until the characters can escort him back to the city.

Wooden Cell Door: 2 in. thick, hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28, Open Lock DC 33.

13. CEREMONIAL CHAMBER (EL 18)

The double doors to this room are well hidden (Search DC 30). Inside, Lord Ombrol Losladan is preparing a ritual sacrifice to end not only the life of Erim Holden, but also the bloodline of his most hated enemy, Baron Kaiius Holden. If the party has not yet encountered Erim in area 12, Akaron Swiftblade is just about to send two mercenaries to fetch him when the PCs arrive here. If the PCs have already encountered those two mercenaries, omit them from the description below. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter, adjusting as needed to accommodate the characters' previous actions.

> This large room is illuminated by numerous candles encircling a stone ceremonial altar in the center, which looks large enough to accommodate a human. Dark brown stains, likely the dried blood from previous sacrifices, stains the polished white marble platform. Also in this room is an enormous and fearsome figure dressed in blackened armor. Tiny red pinpoints of light are visible within his mighty visored helm. A black, evil-looking aura encircles his massive form. At his side are five other ghastly armored forms that appear to be similar in nature, though slightly less imposing. Also here is a human male who is clearly alive. He is dressed in full plate armor, though he wears no helm. A nasty, jagged scar runs from his right temple all the way down to his chin. At his side are two men wearing in lighter armor and a man dressed in robes.

Creatures: Within this room are Ombrol Losladan, the mercenary leader Akaron Swiftblade, five swordwraiths, a mercenary wizard, and two mercenaries (unless they have already been sent after Erim).

Ombrol Losladan: Male human death knight fighter 7/blackguard 3; CR 13; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 7d12 plus 3d12; hp 65; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +10; Grp +15; Atk +15 melee touch (1d8 plus 1 Con, touch) or +20 melee (2d6+13/19–20, *+4 greatsword*) or +13 ranged (1d10+2/19–20, *+2 heavy crossbow*); Full Atk +15 melee touch (1d8 plus 1 Con, touch) or +20/+15 melee (2d6+13/19–20, *+4 greatsword*) or +13 ranged (1d10+2/19–20, *+2 heavy crossbow*); SA abyssal blast, command undead 4/day, Constitution damage, fear aura 15 ft., poison use, smite good 1/day; SQ aura of despair, aura of evil, damage reduction 15/bludgeoning and magic, dark blessing, darkvision 60 ft., *detect good,* immunities (cold, electricity, polymorph), spell resistance 20, summon mount, turn immunity, undead followers, undead traits; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 13, Con –, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +4, Hide +1, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +3, Ride +6; Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Abyssal Blast (Su): Once per day, Ombrol can unleash a blast of eldritch fire that fills a 20-foot-radius spread anywhere within 800 feet of him. The blast deals 10d6 points of damage to each creature in the area

(Reflex DC 16 half). Half of this damage is fire damage; the rest results from divine power and is therefore not subject to reduction via *protection from energy (fire), fire shield (chill shield),* or the like.

Command Undead (Su): Ombrol can command or rebuke undead four times per day as a 1st-level cleric would.

Constitution Damage (Ex): Ombrol's touch attack uses negative energy to deal 1d8 points of damage to a living target. Each successful touch attack also deals 1 point of Constitution damage. A successful DC 16 Will save reduces the damage by half and negates the Constitution damage.

Fear Aura (Su): Each creature with fewer than 5 HD within 15 feet of Ombrol must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 10th).

Poison Use: Ombrol has been trained in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning himself when applying poison to a blade.

Smite Good (Su): Ombrol may attempt to smite good with one normal melee attack. He adds +1 to his attack roll and deals 3 extra points of damage. Smiting a creature that is not good has no effect but uses up the ability for that day.

Aura of Despair (Su): Ombrol radiates a malign aura that causes every enemy within 10 feet of him to take a –2 morale penalty on all saving throws.

Aura of Evil (Ex): Ombrol radiates a moderate aura of evil.

Dark Blessing: Ombrol applies his Charisma bonus to all saving throws. (This modifier is already figured into the statistics given above.)

***Detect Good* (Sp):** Ombrol can use *detect good* at will as the spell.

Summon Mount (Su): Ombrol can summon a mount of any other species normally used for that purpose as long as it has no more than 5 HD. If his mount is lost or killed, he may summon another after a year and a day. Ombrol presently has a fiendish heavy warhorse as his summoned mount. It is housed in the stable (area 9) unless the PCs have already dealt with it.

Turn Immunity (Ex): Ombrol cannot be turned. He can be banished with *holy word,* however, just as if he were an evil outsider. (When banished, Ombrol returns to the Abyssal plane ruled by Orcus.)

Undead Followers: Ombrol attracts lesser undead creatures within a 200-mile radius. He may have up to 20 HD of such followers at a time. These creatures remain in his service until destroyed. They are in addition to any undead creatures he might be able to command or rebuke as a class ability.

Undead Traits: Ombrol is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. He is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to his physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. He cannot be *raised*, and *resurrection* works only if he is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (2/1; save DC 12 + spell level): 1st—*doom, inflict light wounds;* 2nd—*bull's strength.*

Possessions: +3 full plate armor, +4 greatsword, +2 heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, *cloak of Charisma +2, chime of opening,* 2 *potions of invisibility,* 50 gp.

Akaron Swiftblade: Male human fighter 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid; HD 15d10+30; hp 112; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +15; Grp +19; Atk +22 melee (1d10+8/17–20, *+2 flaming bastard sword*) or +19 ranged (1d8+6/19–20/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+4 Str bonus] with *+1 arrows*); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+8/17–20, *+2 flaming bastard sword*) or +19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8+6/19–20/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+4 Str bonus] with *+1 arrows*); AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +10, Ride +14, Spot +15; Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Critical (composite longbow), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

Possessions: +2 full plate armor, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 flaming bastard sword, +1 composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), 50 *+1 arrows, eyes of the eagle, cloak of resistance +2, boots of speed, ring of protection +1, elixir of fire breath,* 3 *potions of bear's endurance*, 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of bull's strength, potion of heroism*, 4 gems (worth 250 gp each), 245 gp.

Swordwraiths (5): hp 32, 35, 36, 40, 42; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenaries (2): Male human fighter 10; hp 48, 64; see Appendix for statistics.

Mercenary Wizard: Male human wizard 10; hp 37; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: Unless the characters attack him first, the death knight decides to question them and see whether they might be useful before slaying them. He first demands to know why the characters have entered his manor. He suspects that they are here to rescue Erim Holden, but he isn't sure and doesn't want to waste good potential retainers. If the characters hold their attacks and answer him, he offers them 10,000 gp to stop their hostilities and become his agents. If allowed to elaborate, he explains that he simply wants them to make occasional trips into the city to retrieve various items, negotiate with mercenary companies, and do whatever else is needed to arrange raids and covert actions that he wishes to conduct in the future. If the characters are interested in his offer, he presses for their acquiescence, though he withdraws the offer if he discovers that the PCs have slain his fiendish warhorse in room 9. If the characters refuse his offer, or otherwise anger him, the death knight orders his forces to attack.

If the situation degenerates into combat, Lord Losladan immediately charges whichever PC appears to be the most physically imposing. Akaron Swiftblade and two of the swordwraiths also gang up on that same opponent, attempting to flank the character and take him down as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the mercenary wizard uses the most powerful offensive spells at his disposal against the party's spellcasters. All of the mercenaries in this room are loyal to Akaron Swiftblade, and no negotiations are possible unless their leader is slain before them.

Development: If the death knight succeeds in slaying Erim, Orcus immediately rewards him with an additional level of blackguard.

Treasure: This room contains the following treasure, in addition to the items carried by the creatures: 15,000 gp (hidden in a secret compartment in one of the pillars [Search DC 30]), 5 *potions of cure critical wounds*, and the Losladan family locket (worth 500 gp).

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs leave without slaying the death knight, he continues to pursue them until they either return to the manor to destroy him, or he succeeds in slaying them via through the swordwraiths he sends against them. Should they wander far away, he hires assassins to murder them. Ombrol's pursuit is relentless, since his primary philosophy is to crush his enemies without fail.

If the party is victorious against the death knight and Erim survives, the characters earn a bonus award of 4,500 XP. Erim quickly moves his permanent residence to the manor and attempts to draw people back to the village. He is willing to invest a sizable sum of money in repairing and renovating the old village dwellings, as well as building new ones. His intent is to grow the village into a town so that he may one day qualify for a title based on his holdings. During this rebuilding phase, the newly resettled community may need protection from the various creatures that prowl the nearby woods.

The fate of Kaiius Holden has been left intentionally vague. You may decide whether he was killed decades ago by some wild animal during an ill-fated hunting expedition, or whether he somehow remains alive. Perhaps he has been imprisoned, whisked away to another plane, or otherwise magically held in a manner that negates the passage of years. Should he return, he tries to take the manor back for himself, whether or not Erim claims to be its current master.

APPENDIX: STATISTICS FOR MAJOR NPCS

This section provides statistics for NPCs and monsters that the characters can meet in several places.

Mercenary: Male or female human fighter 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d10+20; hp 75; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +10; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (1d10+6/17–20, *+1 bastard sword*) or +12 ranged (1d8+4/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+1 Str bonus]); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d10+6/17–20, *+1 bastard sword*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+4/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+1 Str bonus]); AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Intimidate +8, Jump +6, Spot +7; Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

Possessions: +2 full plate armor, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 bastard sword, +1 composite longbow (+3 Str bonus); 25 *+1 arrows; cloak of resistance +1,* 3 *potions of bear's endurance;* 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds,* 170 gp.

Mercenary Wizard: Male or female human wizard 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d4+13; hp

38; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) or +5 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +8 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow with masterwork crossbow bolts); AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Concentration +14, Craft (alchemy) +16, Decipher Script +10, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Spellcraft +18; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Toughness.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/5/5/4/3/2; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, daze, detect magic, light;* 1st—*charm person, feather fall, mage armor, magic missile, summon monster I;* 2nd—*blur, cat's grace, flaming sphere* (2), *invisibility;* 3rd—*fireball, flame arrow, fly, haste;* 4th—*polymorph, stoneskin, summon monster IV;* 5th—*Mordenkainen's faithful hound, summon monster V.*

Spellbook: 0—*acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance, touch of idiocy;* 1st—*alarm, burning hands, cause fear, charm person, feather fall, hold portal, mage armor, magic missile, shield, summon monster I, true strike, unseen servant;* 2nd—*blur, cat's grace, flaming sphere, invisibility, knock, Melf's acid arrow, summon monster II, Tasha's hideous laughter;* 3rd—*fireball, flame arrow, fly, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, slow, summon monster III;* 4th—*charm monster, fear, ice storm, polymorph, stoneskin, summon monster IV;* 5th—*hold monster, Mordenkainen's faithful hound, summon monster V, wall of force.*

Possessions: Quarterstaff; dagger; light masterwork crossbow, 10 masterwork crossbow bolts, *ring of protection +1, cloak of resistance +1, bracers of armor +2, wand of lightning bolt* (25 charges), scroll of *fireball,* scroll of *flesh to stone,* scroll of *teleport,* 2 *potions of haste.*

Swordwraith: Male or female human swordwraith fighter 5; CR 7; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 5d12; hp 32; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk +10 melee (1d8+6/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +7 ranged (1d10+1/19–20, *+1 heavy crossbow*); SA Strength damage; SQ damage reduction 10/magic and slashing, darkvision 60 ft., turn resistance +2, undead traits; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con –, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Hide +3, Jump +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +1, Ride +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Strength Damage (Su): A creature struck by a swordwraith's longsword takes 1 point of Strength damage.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A swordwraith is treated as a 7-HD undead for the purpose of turn, rebuke, command, or bolster attempts.

Undead Traits: A swordwraith is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be *raised*, and *resurrection* works only if it is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darrin Drader was born in Pullman, Washington in 1973, and he attended Washington State University there as well. He has lived in western Washington for the past six years and is thrilled to be an employee of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Darrin has done design work for *Asgard Online Magazine, D20 Weekly Online Magazine, Dragon Magazine, Star Wars Gamer Magazine,* Bastion Press, and of course, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.